

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: 0EXP, IR

SUBJECT: TEHRAN TRADE CENTER

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. STATE AND COMMERCE BECOMING INCREASINGLY CONCERNED WITH IMPLICATIONS OF GROWING OPERATIONAL PROBLEMS FACED BY THE TEHRAN TRADE CENTER AND RESULTANT THREAT TO CONTINUED MEANINGFUL OPERATION OF CENTER IN FUTURE. THESE PROBLEMS FALL INTO THREE AREAS: A) DIPLOMATIC STATUS FOR THE TRADE CENTER DIRECTOR B) CUSTOMS DELAYS AND RESTRICTIONS; AND C) PRESSURES BY NEW LANDLORD TO TERMINATE LEASE. END SUMMARY.

2. IT WAS DECIDED AT THE TIME OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TRADE CENTER IN NOVEMBER 1973 THAT THE DIRECTOR SHOULD BE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PROVIDED DIPLOMATIC STATUS IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO MOST

EFFECTIVELY ACCOMPLISH HIS DUTIES. WE BELIEVE IT TO BE IMPERATIVE THAT SUBSEQUENT DIRECTORS BE GIVEN SAME STATUS. OUR POSITION APPEARS TO CONFLICT WITH GOI FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIALS WHO WOULD PREFER TO HAVE TRADE CENTER RECLASSIFIED AS A NON-PROFIT PRIVATE ORGANIZATION NOT CONNECTED IN ANY WAY WITH U.S. EMBASSY. AS YOU ARE AWARE THEY HAVE BEEN ADVISED THAT THE TRADE CENTER MUST REMAIN UNDER THE AEGIS OF EMBASSY IN ORDER TO RECEIVE THE GOVERNMENT FUNDS NECESSARY FOR OPERATION.

WHILE THE SUBJECT WAS RAISED BY AMBASSADOR HELMS WITH MINISTER OF ECONOMY AND FINANCE ANSARY AND BY UNDER SECRETARY BAKER WITH BOTH THE MINISTER OF ECONOMY AND FINANCE AND THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE, NO AGREEMENT HAS AS YET BEEN FORTHCOMING FROM THE GOI. SINCE THE PRESENT TRADE CENTER DIRECTOR'S TOUR IS DRAWING TO A CLOSE, AND A REASSIGNMENT MAY BE MADE THIS SUMMER, WE BELIEVE THAT EMBASSY SHOULD PRESS FOR A FAVORABLE RESPONSE FROM GOI BEFORE IT BECOMES NECESSARY TO SEEK GOI APPROVAL OF A NEW DIRECTOR.

3. WHILE THE TRADE CENTER STAFF, ABLY ASSISTED BY THE EMBASSY, HAVE MANAGED TO OVERCOME CONTINUINGLY DIFFICULT CUSTOMS PROBLEMS, IT APPEARS THAT THERE IS LITTLE OR NO GOI INTEREST IN HELPING THE CENTER TO PROCESS ITS EXHIBITION GOODS THROUGH IRANIAN CUSTOMS IN A TIMELY FASHION. CUSTOMS DECISIONS BECOME MORE ARBITRARY AND ARE SUBJECT TO FREQUENT CHANGE. FOR EXAMPLE, MOST OF THE EQUIPMENT FOR 51 EXHIBITORS AT THE NOVEMBER 1975 EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS SHOW WAS HELD IN CUSTOMS UNTIL THE LAST DAYS OF THE SHOW. EVEN MORE SERIOUS IS THE REFUSAL OF THE GOI TO ABIDE BY THE RULES OF IATA GOVERNING CONSOLIDATED AIR SHIPMENTS. THE GOI REQUIREMENT THAT SEPARATE AIRWAY BILLS BE PREPARED FOR EACH EXHIBITOR SHIPMENT MADE IT ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OVER AIR FREIGHT SHIPMENTS. FINALLY, IRANIAN CUSTOMS APPARENTLY DOES NOT FOLLOW THE REGULATIONS OF THE BRUSSELS CUSTOMS CONVENTION (OF WHICH IRAN IS A MEMBER) IN PERMITTING PERMANENT ENTRY CLEARANCES FOR ANY SOLD EXHIBITION MERCHANDISE AND THE RETURN SHIPMENT OF THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BALANCE OF UNSOLD GOODS COVERED BY EMBASSY GUARANTY.

4. THE NEW OWNERS OF THE BUILDING IN WHICH THE TRADE CENTER IS LOCATED ARE MOST ANXIOUS TO REGAIN THE CENTER SPACE FOR USE AS AN OUTPATIENT CLINIC. WHILE IT DOES NOT APPEAR THAT THEY HAVE ANY LEGAL RIGHT TO FORCE A TERMINATION OF THE LEASE, THE RELATIONSHIP IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT AND IT CAN BE ASSUMED THAT THE NEW LAND-

LORDS WILL PERSIST IN THEIR EFFORTS TO EJECT THE TRADE CENTER. IF AN AMICABLE AGREEMENT CANNOT BE REACHED, WE BELIEVE THEY SHOULD BE ASKED FOR DETAILS AS TO THE EXTENT OF THEIR INTEREST IN FINANCING THE RELOCATION OF THE CENTER TO A NEW BUILDING.

5. EMBASSY COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE STEPS WHICH NEED TO BE TAKEN TO INSURE THAT THE TRADE CENTER MAY CONTINUE TO PRODUCE SUCCESSFUL EXHIBITS AND EFFECTIVELY STIMULATE U.S. SALES TO IRAN WOULD BE APPRECIATED. KISSINGER

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